

AFN to rock around Iraq

'Freedom Radio' to ring out nationwide with live broadcasts

By Spc. Briana Wright
319th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD — The newly aired Armed Forces Network radio station, Freedom Radio, will soon be the

"Big Voice" resounding throughout Iraq.

The history-making station is extending its broadcasts to airwaves reaching areas outside of Baghdad and will be heard on different frequencies in major U.S. troop locations countrywide.

Although the stations are not yet on air, soldiers all over can look forward to hearing the same upbeat shows that the troops in the Baghdad area have enjoyed.

"We will be able to reach those U.S. troops who are stationed throughout the country, which are in the major areas of Balad, Tikrit, Kirkuk, Mosul, and most areas north of Baghdad," said Lt. Col. Perry Nouis, AFN-Iraq's commander.

The station, which first aired Dec. 10, aims to relay Iraq-specific information to troops in the entire country such as live news, weather, sports and, most impor-

tantly, command information.

"They (the troops) all need command information from General Sanchez," Nouis said. "We are a direct

See AFN, Page 11

Freedom Radio brings troops support from home

The response from Freedom Radio station supporters has been remarkably overwhelming, especially those from listeners in the states.

Sgt. Sandra Mercado, DJ for the morning show and member of the 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment, did an interview with WLS-AM radio in Chicago to discuss AFN's job in Iraq. The result was about 50 congratulatory and thankful e-mails. A few listeners even offered to donate radios to the troops to enable them to hear the uplifting broadcasts of the station.

"When they (the DJs) asked me how many listeners we have, I told them I couldn't say because I didn't know how many troops had radios," Mercado said. "People heard it on their way to work and several people responded."

The crew of Freedom Radio knows first hand that hard work and dedication pay off. Mercado sees this as an example of how fellow Americans back home are thinking about the troops and supporting them all the way.

"People at home are getting involved," she said "and that's the cool part."



Photo by Sgt. Tyrone Walker

Pfc. Abbey Cayanan talks to troops during "Abbey in the Afternoon" which plays weekdays 3-6 p.m.

Texas hospitality

Reservists donate medical supplies to Iraqi health care system

Story and photos by Sgt. Mark S. Rickert
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD — Soldiers with the 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit based in Abilene, Texas, provided medical supplies to the Al Kadamiya Private Hospital in Baghdad.

According to Maj. John E. Padgett, the officer in charge of the public health team, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, 1st Armored Division, the public health team's primary mission is to help restart and re-equip the Iraqi public health care system.

Although the team aids mostly public hospitals, the private hospital in Al Kadamiya won their attention while the team conducted a broad-based health care system evaluation of Iraq.

"When we went to the hospital, they asked for our help," said Padgett. "We determined that they practiced good medicine there, and we wanted to help them. I think what cinched it for us was they provided free health care one or two days a week for the local populace in Al Kadamiya, and we wanted to help the Iraqi people in this regard."

According to Padgett, the public health team acquired the medical supplies through a number of different channels, such as donations, and from some other units, which had found some medical supplies



Maj. John E. Padgett, the public health team officer in charge with the 490th Civil Affairs Battalion, gives medical supplies to the staff of the Al Kadamiya Private Hospital in Baghdad, Dec. 2.

throughout Baghdad. After the war, the team discovered various medical supplies in abandoned Republican Guard health care facilities.

"We found these facilities partially looted or damaged from the war," said Padgett. "My team took charge of what medical instruments or supplies we could salvage, and we've started distributing these supplies to the health care system of Iraq."

The soldiers on the team believe that donating medical supplies to the hospital is important on many different levels. These contributions not only benefit the hospitals, but the act of charity also strengthens the bonds with the community.

"The battle for hearts and minds still goes on," said Padgett. "If we show the Iraqi people that we care about the humanitarian aspect of things, it will benefit us. Also, it's the right thing to do. And we're the good guys. We want to be there for them."

Padgett says the tangible offerings also create an overt display of assistance to the Iraqi people. Though civil affairs soldiers work in many areas, ranging from education to humanitarian assistance, most of these programs take time to develop, such as training programs and infrastructure development. The act of giving, however, leaves an instant impression, he said.

"When you can actually bring something and put it in the hands of these people—that's a good thing — not only for us but for the people of Iraq," Padgett said.

Iraqis train as prison guards

Day 3 — Local judo champ teaches self defense

Story and photos by
Sgt. Rachel Brune
800th Military Police Brigade

AL HILLAH — Students at the first Iraqi Corrections Services regional training academy here began their third day of training with a lesson in self-defense from the Iraqi judo champion.

Dressed in sweats to ward off an early morning December chill, Abdulhady Raheem Muhsen, director of the Baghdad Training Academy and second degree black belt, began to lead his assortment of 155 trainees through the basics of unarmed combat.

Muhsen taught his recruits how to block punches and kicks thrown from a variety of positions. He demonstrated the technique, then watched as the trainees attempted to repeat his movements.

As the students followed, Muhsen and a teaching assistant, Richard Billings, Coalition Provisional Authority senior prisons adviser, walked up and down between the lines adjusting an arm here, a stance there.

"Yassar! Emin!" Muhsen called out. In English: "Left! Right!" His instructions were mimicked by a group of small children who had assembled on a nearby rooftop to watch the proceedings.

After teaching his trainees to block, Muhsen moved on to kicks, punches and disarming an armed prisoner.

For this demonstration, Muhsen called on Sgt. Enrique Navarro, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 800th

Military Police Brigade military policeman. Navarro, wearing a bright orange jump suit, was disarmed three different ways and ended up in the dirt several times.

With good humor, Muhsen then called for a break. Students milled about as he discussed his work with CPA and the new academy.

Muhsen has been director of the academy since his promotion to the position in October. He has 23 years of experience as a player and coach at police athletic clubs.

He was originally working at the Al Tasferat prison facility in Baghdad and went through the first ICS academy course as a retrainee.

"[Muhsen] took the initiative for making a better Iraq," said Capt. Michael McIntyre of the 494th Brigade Liaison Detachment who has been working the prisons mission since it first became a responsibility of the 800th MP Brigade.

Speaking through a translator, Muhsen expressed his wishes for the successful



With the help of Sgt. Enrique Navarro, Abdulhady Raheem Muhsen, Iraqi judo champion, demonstrates one way to disarm a prisoner wielding a weapon during the third day of the Iraqi Corrections Services Regional Training Academy.

completion of the course, to have "good officers" for the facilities, and gave "thanks for my victim, Navarro!"

Using the manual developed by the CPA prisons team, Muhsen has taken on the responsibility of training the new corrections guard force.

In addition, he was responsible for hiring six Iraqi instructors, all with about the same amount of experience, according to McIntyre.

Although only one day was fully dedicated to the judo techniques, the students undergo about one hour of refresher training each day, said Muhsen.

The course was originally 12 days, but was cut down to 11 by removing a day of administrative work when it was brought to Al Hillah, said McIntyre.

The regional school was the idea of the Al Hillah prison warden, Raid Jader Khalaf, said McIntyre.

"We hope in the future, when we open many prisons, the Hillah academy will be a model academy to other prisons," said Khalaf through a translator.

Khalaf speaks with pride of his facility, the first to open after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, he said. He wants to protect the system from corruption to be the example for other prisons and to set the standard for other prisons and programs.

It makes the community stronger, said Khalaf. His guards and trainees are able to learn many things from the military policemen who have experience in corrections and detainee operations.

As the break ended, Muhsen and his



The Iraqi judo champion, now Director of the Baghdad ICS Training Academy, demonstrates a kick for trainees at the Al Hillah regional training academy.

assistants gathered up the students and placed them back in formation. Through the doorway into the Al Hillah courtyard came once again the sounds of "Yassar! Emin!"

First class graduates from ICS academy

By Sgt. Rachel Brune
800th Military Police Brigade

AL HILLAH — The first regional Iraqi Corrections Services Training Academy class graduated in a ceremony here Dec. 10.

Lined up in a neat formation of three sections, 152 graduates listened to a collection of speakers.

"I hope you will all succeed," said Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, 800th Military Police Brigade commander who attended the morning ceremony along with Sgt. Major Pascual Cartagena, S-3 sergeant major.

The trainees received their graduation certificates from Abdulhady Raheem Muhsen, director of the Baghdad Training Academy who ran the 10-day program.

Raid Jader Khalaf, warden of Al Hillah prison, spoke of his pride in the trainees and his facility. He urged the new guards to remember their training and always do the right thing.

Soldiers from the 494th Brigade Liaison Detachment and the 310th MP Company attended the ceremony.

After the presentation of certificates, Karpinski presented Khalaf with a certificate of appreciation. Khalaf and Muhsen presented various members of the training team with plaques and ceremonial daggers.

At the end, Karpinski led the new graduates in a rousing "Hooah!" The formations were then dismissed for informal photography sessions and conversation.



Photo by Sgt. Mark S. Rickert

Sgt. Cornell W. Yell, who is part of the security detail with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 237th Support Battalion, 1st Armored Division, helps distribute the "Baghdad Now" to local Iraqi citizens.

Newspaper connects soldiers, Iraqis

By Sgt. Mark S. Rickert,
372nd Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

BAGHDAD – As soldiers drop a bundle of the latest "Baghdad Now" newspaper onto the sidewalk, Iraqi children tackle the newspaper heap like a fumbled football during the Super Bowl.

Whether they are concerned citizens or just children who like to read, "Baghdad Now" is drawing an enormous fan base. The newspaper's hype and its remarkably low price (it's free!) make the paper a useful tool for the 361st Psychological Operations Company (Tactical), an Army Reserve Unit from Bothell, Wash., which is currently supporting the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, a subordinate unit of the 1st Armored Division.

Every month, the psychological operations team distributes 70,000 issues to the people in Baghdad.

The paper not only increases public awareness toward safety hazards, such as celebratory fire, but it also keeps the community informed on what the U.S. and Coalition forces are doing for Iraq.

"The paper shows how we

interact with the Iraqi government during this transitional period, and how we, together, are improving life in Baghdad," said Staff Sgt. Richard K. Wilson, who is the tactical psychological operations team chief. "More importantly, we want the people to know what's going, so they can see how they are making a difference. This way they can say, 'hey, my community made this happen.'"

Distributing the paper creates an effective medium for communication, opening many doors previously closed to the soldiers. According to Wilson, handing out newspapers gives the soldiers "instant access" to the community.

"Any time you give these people something, their defenses come down—it's human nature," said Wilson. "We gain instant access by giving them something, and they spread the message expressed in these newspapers."

"The act of giving anything to these people is an act of goodwill," said Sgt. Owen J. Jungemann. "Especially for people who don't get a lot of anything, especially information. Papers cost money, and they don't

have money. So any access to information is good."

By showing the Iraqi people how the Coalition forces are helping to improve Baghdad, the psychological operations team hopes to increase positive attitudes toward the Coalition and, in turn, decrease anti-Coalition behavior.

"It's important for us to show what the Coalition is doing here," said Jungemann. "Positive feelings toward Americans here result in fewer of us dying. When people see that we are rebuilding schools and improving their way of life, they are less likely to act violently toward us."

Through face-to-face encounters, the psychological operations team also forms ties with community leaders, such as religious leaders, medical practitioners and professors. Befriending these key voices of the community is an effective approach for spreading a positive message.

"It is extremely important that we gain the support of these key communicators, and so far, we've built strong, solid relations within the community," said Wilson.

"This way, they will speak on our behalf, and people will listen."

Officials prohibit, punish possession of war trophies

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Servicemembers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are prohibited from bringing back to the United States any items that were formerly in the possession of the enemy, officials said.

With about 140,000 American servicemembers scheduled for rotation from Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. Central Command officials are very clear that servicemembers cannot bring home weapons, ammunition or other prohibited items.

A few soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division understand how serious the command is. Some tried to smuggle weapons back from Baghdad, and they have gone through courts-martial. Others received Article 15 administrative punishments.

"There is a whole spectrum of punishments, depending

on the severity of the offense," said Army Maj. Robert Resnick, a lawyer at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Army Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command, has put out the policy. Basically, under no circumstances can individuals take as a souvenir an object that was formerly in the possession of the enemy. The taking of war trophies goes against the Coalition mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, officials said.

"We didn't go into Iraq or Afghanistan to conquer them, but to liberate them," said Marine Capt. Bruce Frame, a Central Command spokesman. "Taking articles from those countries sends the wrong message."

Servicemembers with questions should work through the chain of command, CENTCOM officials said, adding that they will be given ample briefings on what is allowed and what is not. In the case of Iraq, unit commanders will brief servicemembers on the policy before leaving for Kuwait.

In Kuwait, military police will explain the policy and

will permit an amnesty period before searching gear and vehicles. In the United States, U.S. Customs Service officials will examine individual gear.

In Afghanistan, unit commanders will explain the policy, and military police there also will explain it and offer an amnesty period before the servicemembers board the planes. Again, customs officials will examine gear and baggage upon return to the United States.

The same prohibitions pertain to American civilians serving in the Central Command area of operations.

Other federal laws pertain to other illegal items. For example, servicemembers cannot bring back plants, animals or other organic materials.

No one can bring antiquities into the United States, and of course, no one can bring drugs or drug paraphernalia, officials said. The overall prohibition does not pertain to souvenirs that can be legally imported into the United States, officials said.

Troops are encouraged to submit photographs and stories for consideration for publication in Coalition Scimitar.

Submissions may be sent to
cpiccmdinfo@baghdadforum.com.

Remember:
Operational security is everyone's business!

Operation Ho, Ho, Ho comes to orphans

Story and photo by Sgt. Christopher Stanis
1st Armored Division

BAGHDAD – Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus right down ... Baghdad Lane?

After a suggestion from Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Ferrand, a medic with 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, to the 1-325 chaplain, Capt. Darren Chester, the two, along with a handful of other 1-325 paratroopers, conducted "Operation Ho, Ho, Ho" Dec. 20. The unit is part of task Force 1st Armored Division.

"It's not a big 'Walt Disney' story to tell," said Ferrand. "But it is a story from the heart."

The group brought stockings stuffed with toys and candy to two orphanages in Baghdad – the Al Awiya orphanage and the St. Hanna orphanage.

"I remembered working with the orphanages and the kids," Ferrand said. "I asked the chaplain what he had planned, and he didn't have anything, so I offered up the idea."

With toys sent to Ferrand by family and friends, and donations

from 1-325 soldiers, "Santa's little helpers" stuffed more than 80 stockings full of goodies for the children.

A tight squeeze and a couple of turns down alleyway streets led to a gated, well-kept yard with a small two-story house. Inside, a Christmas tree stood in the corner of the living room. At the base of the tree sat a nativity scene. Around a coffee table in the room sat three aged, warm-hearted women.

These are the sisters of the St. Hanna orphanage, a Catholic orphanage that houses about a dozen girls.

The well-mannered girls filed down the stairs to receive their gifts.

After a short visit, the soldiers moved on to the next orphanage.

This time, more than 60 ram-bunctious children filled the room of the barracks-like building where Ferrand's group passed out the presents.

Some of the orphaned children lost their parents during major ground operations of this war; some lost their parents in past wars. Others were simply not wanted, or the parents couldn't afford to take care of them,



Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Ferrand, a medic with 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, hands out bags with stockings and goodies to children and staff at the Al Awiya and St. Hanna orphanages in Baghdad, Iraq, Dec. 20 for Operation Ho, Ho, Ho.

Ferrand said.

Ferrand had an earlier relationship with the orphanages. He helped conduct physicals and provided needed medical care to

the children early after the liberation of Iraq. He said he can see the improvement in their health and in their spirits.

"No matter where you go in the

world, kids are kids are kids," Ferrand said. "They want to learn ... they want an education. These kids have a good outlook on life."

Soldiers spread Christmas cheer across northern Iraq

By Pfc. Chris Jones
40th Public Affairs Detachment

NORTHERN IRAQ — Sgt. Paul Mauney trudges through crowds at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. He's pushing an artificial Christmas tree in a rolling cart and enjoying the attention onlookers are giving him. The nickname he's been dubbed with, "Christmas Tree Soldier," seems appropriate.

One week later, "the Freedom Tree" is sitting gloriously beside Mauney's office at the Division Main compound in Mosul, Iraq, where the 101st Airborne Division is headquartered. Now adorned with bright lights and bells of silver, blue, red and green, Mauney says his evergreen friend is a memory in the making – a charming, spirited combat zone comrade to him and his fellow soldiers.

"Christmas to me is very special," Mauney said. "It's different in Iraq, because you're not with your family, but in a way it's the same, because you're with your Army family."

A personnel assistance clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 101st, Mauney is but one of the tens of



Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division leave the headquarters palace on the Division Main compound in Mosul Saturday night, while an inflatable snowman with an AK-47 watches their movements. The snowman was put up by soldiers of the 101st for the holiday season.

thousands of troops in Northern Iraq who are refusing to let the holiday season die – combat zone Christmas or bust.

Soldiers in Mosul, Tallafar and Qayarah, the three main cities housing soldiers with or attached to the 101st Airborne Division, are immersing themselves into dozens of events celebrating the holiday season through New Year's Day. Live nativities, caroling, gift exchanges, raffle contests and even a "Best Grinch"

Contest are among the countless activities spawned by troops.

Chaplain (Capt.) John Stutz, commander of the 127th Chaplain Detachment, a two-man ministry unit out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, attached to the 101st, said the work he's put in organizing events for the Christmas season "has been a joy."

"I think it's so joyful to see that, no matter all the things we don't have here, the spirit of

Christmas remains," he said. "A lot of the stuff we treasure in America, we don't have here. But what we're learning is that this stuff isn't what makes joy; it just makes big piles of material possessions. The true joy comes from the inside."

Inside or outside, the 101st is making Christmas happen. Kellogg, Brown and Root Dining Facilities across the 101st area of operations have been offering soldiers a chance to win various prizes with a raffle contest dubbed The 12 Days of Christmas. Soldiers get the chance to win items such as DVD players, compact disc players and various CDs, while eating their dinner in massively decorated facilities.

The KBR dining facility in Tallafar, supporting the 101st's 187th Infantry Regiment "Rakkasans," is so decorated with Christmas cheer, each television set in the building is paired with its own Christmas tree, and the beverage stands are all adorned with 6" stick-on Santa Clause images. As Sgt. Marien Cuthbert put it while eating dinner and glancing around, "It's kind of hard to forget what time of year it is."

At the Division Rear com-

pound in Mosul, soldiers organized a live nativity service, while soldiers of the 501st Signal Battalion are scheduling a Christmas caroling event for Monday.

Soldiers of the 21st Combat Support Hospital are throwing a "Christmas Eve Eve Party" Tuesday at Division Rear, while troops of HHC, 101st are arranging a Christmas Eve dance party with a disc jockey and free snacks and beverages.

The "winner" of the Best Grinch Contest, a two-week long competition to determine the grumpiest soldier on the Division Main compound, will be announced Christmas Day.

Stutz has also been involved in Operation Shoebox, a nationwide trust aimed at supporting soldiers serving in the Middle East. He's received hundreds of boxes in the mail from Americans in Texas, Ohio, Kentucky and other states to disperse among 101st troops.

"These aren't cheap things that are being sent to us," he said. "Some of these boxes are filled with over \$50 worth of gifts. On Christmas Day, we'll hand the packages out to soldiers. I'm looking for the Grinch. They're

See **CHRISTMAS**, Page 10